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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 003124

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TAGS: [IS](#) [UNESCO](#)

SUBJECT: [USUNESCO](#) - ISRAELI AMBASSADOR DISCUSSED FOLLOW-UP TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Classified by Ambassador Louise Oliver, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (U) Summary: Wanting to touch base following last month's Executive Board at UNESCO, Israel's ambassador to UNESCO called on Ambassador Oliver to thank the U.S. for its work on the resolution regarding Jerusalem and on the "cartoon" issue. Strategy was discussed about best ways to work together and advance common interests in the coming months.

2. (U) Israel's ambassador to UNESCO and current Charge d'Affaires in France, David Kornbluth, met with Ambassador Oliver May 11. Kornbluth was accompanied by embassy officer Daniel Safran.

3. (C) Kornbluth began by saying the Israelis were extremely grateful for the role played by the U.S. during the recent Executive Board. He felt we had gotten through the spring session of the Board "pretty well," but asked if we thought it would be wise to have Israel be more pro-active in attempting to change the language of future draft resolutions.

4. (C) Kornbluth suggested that he is getting some pressure from his foreign ministry to try to change the Syrian language in the resolution on cultural institutions in Jerusalem. Ambassador Oliver told him that the negotiations leading to the defusing of the issue were a success, and that Israel faced an uphill battle if it tries to push for a change and also risked to be seen as contentious, which might have an adverse effect on its influence within UNESCO.

5. (C) Ambassador Oliver said that the best strategy would be to use precedent for protection. The fact that Israel had already accepted the language at least four times in the past, trying to change it would be seen negatively not just by the Arab states, but potentially by other member states as well. Ambassador Oliver also said that trying to change the Syrian language would be a high-risk strategy, as it would open the door for other changes and would probably be unsuccessful.

6. (C) Both ambassadors noted the work of the Jordanian ambassador to UNESCO as an "honest broker," and remarked that she was able to "hold the line" during the negotiations before the Executive Board.

7. (C) Ambassador Oliver made the point that even the Palestinian observer to UNESCO could argue that precedent makes any possible change in language difficult, locking them into the language that has already been hammered out. Kornbluth noted that the Palestinian wasn't easy to deal with, but said that he preferred him to the possibility of a Hamas supporter taking his place. Ambassador Oliver agreed and remarked that she found the present observer significantly easier to deal with than his predecessor.

8. (SBU) Kornbluth also told us that he had spoken to Francisco Bandarin, director of UNESCO's World Heritage Center, and asked him directly if UNESCO had plans to create an office in Jerusalem. Bandarin had told him no, though Kornbluth said that Bandarin had previously told him yes. Ambassador Oliver agreed that Bandarin is often hard to pin down, but while the subject of Jerusalem is too hot right now to deal with, getting Bandarin to give a straight answer is completely justified. Kornbluth said that he was concerned that there is some interest to increase the size of UNESCO's footprint in Jerusalem. Ambassador Oliver also suggested that Bandarin be asked directly what he has done in terms of changing the way UNESCO is operating in Jerusalem and Kornbluth promised to send some key points to her based on a recent conversation he had with Bandarin.

9. (SBU) During discussion of the upcoming World Heritage Committee meeting in July, Ambassador Oliver suggested that a short visit by Kornbluth would be useful, signaling Israel's strong interest in the subject and its support for the Israeli site that has been proposed for the next addition to the World Heritage list. Ambassador Oliver also added that she thought Israel should be more active in all the key committees of which it is now a member, including Man and the Biosphere, the International Program for the Development of Communications and the MOST (Management of Social Transformations) program. (Note: Israel was elected to all of the committees in the fall of 2005, despite supporting the United States' position on the

cultural diversity convention.)

10. (SBU) Ambassador Oliver mentioned that the ratification process for the cultural expressions convention was moving slowly toward the 30 member states needed to bring it into force. Both ambassadors agreed that the use of UNESCO funds to promote the ratification process would be viewed as a misuse of budgetary funds. Ambassador Oliver noted that we should at some point bring up the issue of how many member states are needed to bring instruments into force, as the 30-state threshold was set years ago when the overall number of member states was much smaller than today. She remarked that given the low 30-member threshold, that it is plausible that one geographic group could, by itself, push a convention into force.

11. SBU) Finally, Kornbluth said that he was pleased with the U.S.'s idea to create a new Group I "informal information group" to counter the EU informational meetings. Ambassador Oliver said that she expects to call a meeting of the new group in the coming weeks to try to institutionalize the meetings as soon as possible.
Oliver